



# Hunting *f* Factors: An Islamecocritical Analysis of Selected Canadian Hunting Poems

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**Abstract**— *For food; fur; fat; and fun, humans hunt. The literary analysis of these hunting factors is commonly non-religious being based on secular Ecocriticism. With the coinage of Islamecocriticism (Islamic thought integrated into ecocritical theory), the current study aims at bridging a gap in academia by illustrating the input of Islam concerning hunting through literary criticism. The three angles of Islamecocritical theory: religion, literature, and environmentalism are fused to introduce crucial hunting rulings that govern the relationship between the hunter and the prey. The argument is not based on humans' whims, but it is derived from heavenly wisdom whose goal is the benefit of all creatures. With the development of the discussion, some suggestions and solutions are traced in selected Canadian hunting eco-poems. Though the field of discussion is Canadian, it is intended to be applied to any hunting field.*

**Keywords**— *Canadian eco-poetry, hunting factors, hunting rulings, Islamecocriticism*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Hunting is a controversial practice among contemporaries. Proponents demand that it is freely practiced; opponents call for its total banning. Islam's handling of hunting comes in a middle position between hunters and anti-hunters. Incorporating Islam in the poetic investigation of hunting via Islamecocriticism relies on the fact that "Islamecocriticism addresses about one-quarter of the world population. It touches on Muslims' religious convictions and alerts them to the fact that environmentalism has been an abandoned duty but now becomes a life priority. The remaining three-quarters of the world population will benefit greatly from a green Islamic tradition which is logical, unified, non-whimsical, and balanced" (Abolfotoh, 2018, 1388). Hunting in Islam is a conditioned divine gift. If humans practice it within the limits of Islamic rulings, they will enjoy its blessings and avoid its repercussions. Therefore, the earlier four factors of hunting will be analyzed in relation to the following Islamecocritical principles: stewardship, divine judgment, moderation, prohibition of corruption, harm prevention, innateness, and divine balance (1374, 1378-83). Most of these tenets are established in environmental debates. However, some of

them are neglected in real-life practices; consequently, they do not function appropriately.

Stewardship in Islam is not a granted right but a divine privilege gained by intellectual and physical efforts to organize the interaction between humankind and other creatures. It "triggers the difficult challenge of consuming and keeping the safety of nature at the same time" (1375). Stewardship lays down restrictions rather than allowing total hegemony, so it is tied to divine judgment by which humans are rewarded or punished for their worldly deeds. Aspiring for reward and fearing penalty urge humans to consider moderate practices and to avoid creating any corruption or harm. These principles are stressed in Islam, especially when dealing with animals, because they share humans' feelings of fear, happiness, pain, and many others. Moreover, animals have distinguished ways of life that should be respected. The Sunnah<sup>1</sup> demonstrates these facts in several incidents like the one in which:

The Apostle of Allah (ﷺ) entered the garden of a man from the Ansar (Helpers). All of a sudden when a Camel saw the Prophet (ﷺ), it wept tenderly producing a yearning sound and its eyes flowed. The Prophet (ﷺ) came to it and wiped the

temple of its head, so it calmed down. He then said, "Whose Camel is this?" A young man from the Ansar came and said, "This is mine, Apostle of Allah (ﷺ)." The Prophet said "Don't you fear Allah about this beast which Allah has given in your possession. It has complained to me that you keep it hungry and load it heavily which fatigues it." (*Sunan Abi Dawud*, b. 14, h. 2543)<sup>2</sup>

The Hadith implies that kindness to animals and repulsing their abuse is an instinctual impulse that springs out of unspoiled innateness. The Almighty God lays innateness in all creatures, including mankind, to organize their Earthly life. Being privileged by intellectual abilities, humans are supposed to benefit from this inborn pure quality to perceive facts and deny falsehoods.

If humans adopt the aforementioned principles, they will conserve the balanced forces of nature that are currently falling apart. Following the Almighty God's statement that He "has set up the Balance" which controls the entire universe, He warns humans: "[Y]ou may not transgress (due) balance" that sustains life on Earth (Qur'an, 55:7-8, translated by M. Al-Hilali & M. Khan). This divine balance is physically perceived in a mathematically calculated universe and metaphysically conceived in balanced ethics that protect it. Divine balance is known in the Western ecocritical tradition as natural balance. Despite the many points of agreement between secular Ecocriticism and Islamecocriticism, there are some fundamental differences that are terminological and/or ideological. The preceding reference to natural balance is an example. In Islam, nature is not an independent being with god-like powers. On the contrary, it is one of the Almighty God's subservient creatures. Its existence and all that occurs in its kingdom are completely tied to the Creator's will. That is why when talking about natural balance from an Islamecocritical stance, it should be conveniently termed: divine balance. This way the balance is ascribed to the Creator, not to nature.

"Muhammad (صلي الله عليه وسلم)... is the Messenger of Allah and the last (end) of the Prophets" (33:40). The verse indicates that Islam is the last divine message to humanity; therefore, its teachings are unrestricted by time or place to suit the needs of humans until the end of time. Islamecocriticism which is grounded in Islamic thought is, likewise, unrestricted by time or place. Consequently, it is intended to be applied to any literary text. However, for limiting the scope of the study, three Canadian poems have been selected: C. Mair's "The Last Bison," E. Pratt's "The Ice-Floes," and P. Christensen's "Keeping Fear Away." They present appropriate analytical texts and contexts for hunting from an Islamecocritical perspective. The

discussion below begins with a thorough examination of hunting rulings in Islam followed by an eco-poetic analysis of the four factors of hunting in light of the principles of Islamecocriticism and the explained rulings.

## II. DISCUSSION

### 2.1 Rulings of hunting in Islam

The argument is based on the two primary sources of Islamic legislation: The Noble Qur'an and the Sunnah with commentaries by some Muslim scholars. "**Lawful** to you," the Almighty God states, "is (the pursuit of) **water-game** and its use for **food** — for the **benefit** of yourselves and those who travel, but forbidden is (the pursuit of) **land-game** as long as you are in a state of *Ihrâm* (for *Hajj* or '*Umrah*). And **fear Allâh** to Whom you shall be gathered back" (Qur'an, 5:96, Italics original, bold mine). The Arabic word equivalent to hunting — "الصيد" — is used to mean both hunting and fishing. The preceding verse states that fishing is a legal human activity. It is understood that hunting is, likewise, lawful to humans except for some periods in which Muslims are in a state of *Ihrâm*. Hunting is further tackled in many other verses, and a whole book in the Sunnah is dedicated to its rulings. This book offers monitoring regulations for this bloody relationship between humans and animals.

Hunting is discussed in Islam considering three aspects: the hunter, the prey, and the hunting tools. al-Munajjid (a Muslim scholar and founder of the academic, educational, and fatwa website *Islam Q&A*) states that the hunter "should be of sound mind and have reached the age of discernment" (2014). He adds that "the hunter must invoke the name of Allah, may He be exalted, when releasing his hunting animal or shooting" to "catch that which it is permissible to hunt." Such conditions ensure the hunter's sense of responsibility toward the hunted animal and his sense of gratitude to the Almighty God Who allowed hunting as a mercy to humans. In addition, Azam writes in *SeekersGuidance* (an online Islamic educational institute) that the hunter should not be engaged "in another unrelated action between the sending [of hunting animals] and the capturing" (2014). Hence, he should focus on the quick release of wounded animals' suffering by slaughtering them if they do not die immediately by hunting animals. Hunters in Islam are controlled by responsible stewardship toward preys. This stewardship is stimulated by pure innateness that guards the right of animals to die comfortably and instantly. Eventually, hunters should be watchful of divine judgment that holds reward or penalty depending on their behavior with fellow creatures.

As for the prey, it should be "a wild animal that is too difficult to capture" (al-Munajjid, 2014). In addition, "it

is permissible to hunt both animals whose flesh may be eaten and those whose flesh may not be eaten" to obtain their skin, hair, feathers, or fat or to ward off their evil (al-Munajjid). Once the hunter gets the wounded animal in a handy condition, he should follow the Islamic/Halal slaughter which is governed by some boundaries. First, the slaughter "should be carried out using a sharp instrument" (Gezairy, 1997, 10). Second, the animal should not "have the knife sharpened before its eyes or be slaughtered within sight of other animals," particularly of its kind (10). Third, after mentioning the name of Allah, the slaughter should be "carried out with utmost mercy on the part of the slaughterer and minimum pain and suffering on the part of the animal" in specific places of the body (11). This procedure is called *tazkyia* (an Arabic term for the Islamic method of animal slaughter), and it has three methods: *zabh*, *nahr*, and *aqr* (9). Skinning, severing the head, or using any part of the animal is allowed only after making sure of its death. Additionally, captured animals should not be bludgeoned to death: "Forbidden to you (for food)," the verse goes, is "... that which has been killed... by a violent blow" (Qur'an, 5:3). All these measures emphasize harm prevention.

Concerning the hunting tools, they can be made of any sharp materials that pierce or cut the flesh like bullets or arrows (not poisoned ones) (al-Munajjid, 2014). Nets and traps should not be used to catch and kill the animal independently from the hunter (at-Tiar, 2003, 13) because they cause a slow tormenting death. However, the hunter may use them as aiding tools for catching the animal, then he straightaway kills or slaughters it (13). Furthermore, stones should not be used as hunting tools. Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) states that the stone "does not catch the game, nor does it inflict defeat on the enemy, but breaks the tooth and puts the eye out" (*Sahih Muslim*, b. 34, h. 4808). Out of the juristic principle stating that what leads to the prohibited is prohibited (As-Sameraie, 2008, 19), using high-tech weapons in hunting is a sinful act if they lead to harming the divine balance of ecosystems by exterminating some species. Hence, they are regarded as a sort of corruption and a violation of moderation.

Hunting animals and birds of prey can be used in hunting. The basic principles are: "it is permissible to hunt with anything that may be taught and trained," the hunting animal or bird "should wound the prey in any part of its body," and it should not kill by a blow or bite without causing a wound (al-Munajjid, 2014). In the Hadith allowing the use of trained dogs in hunting, the Prophet necessitates reciting the name of Allah while setting them off, and he permits eating from the game even if it was killed by the trained dogs but on the condition that no other dog, which the hunter did not set off, participates in catching it (*Sahih Muslim*, b. 34, h. 4732). This Hadith emphasizes and

explains the Qur'anic verse in which the Almighty God refers to "those beasts and birds of prey which you have trained as hounds, training and teaching them (to catch) in the manner as directed to you by Allâh; so eat of what they catch for you, but pronounce the Name of Allâh over it, and fear Allâh. Verily, Allâh is Swift in reckoning" (5:4). The Creator blesses humans with hunting to sustain their lives. Then, He blesses them once again with some species made subservient to them to aid in catching wild animals. This double blessing should be met with gratitude, not irresponsibility. Accordingly, the verse ends with a warning; humans should fear the Almighty God's punishment if they misbehave with His creatures. Misbehavior and the numerous inappropriate ways by which animals are treated are instances of the current plight which will unfold itself soon in the eco-poetic discussion of hunting.

The justice of killing animals to serve anthropocentric needs is a complex arguable topic in secular Ecocriticism. Adams writes that hunting is much debated in international research with positions "range from 'the first hunters were the first humans' to the 'meat is murder' argument" (2013, 43). Being a hunter, he analyzes hunting as a cultural involvement in nature and asks the recurrent question posed by almost all scholars: "Is it a cruel, archaic and redundant practice; or a respectful relationship between and among humans and nonhumans[?]" (43). Attempting to answer this question from an Islamecocritical viewpoint is the focus of the following section. New insights and critical ethical guides are proposed through the eco-poetic analysis of hunting factors to draw clear-cut lines that can extend to real humanimal encounters.

## 2.2 Food factor

The Bison, currently a near-threatened species, had once flourished in the wild plains of America. Its "population west of Mississippi River at the close of the civil war numbered in the millions" (Shaw, 1995, 150). The bison had been an essential part of Indigenous peoples' diet; they hunted it for food. The plains' tribes are known for their wise consumption of nature. Consequently, the bison herds were not affected by their moderate hunting practices, mostly conducted with bow and arrow. Praising their lifestyle, Garrard calls them "Ecological Indians" and "exemplary dwellers" who were "attuned to the Earth and its creatures" (2004, 120). The ecological ethos introduced by indigenous Ecocriticism commonly represents their traditions as an alternative epistemology that foregrounds mutual respect for the non-human as members of a biotic community (Indriyanto, 2020, 1, 3). With the coming of the European settlers to the American prairies, bison hunting was commercialized and politicized. The herd numbers

dwindled to a few hundred in a short time due to overhunting. The settlers hunted the bison to consume the tongue, use its hide, and "starve Native Americans" (Phippen, 2016). Hunting was a means toward victory, so it was done with great atrocity.

Mair's "The Last Bison" is about the drastic hunting of bison herds which passed through the three stages of Modern Age Hunting Rituals: overhunting, near extinction, and preservation. Mair (1838-1927) was a Canadian poet and journalist of post-Confederation Canada who tackled Canadian nature in the manner of Keats and the other classic poets with their reliance on sensual imagery and their belief that nature is a potential source of truth and inspiration ("Charles Mair"). "The Last Bison" is written in free verse except for the bison's song which is italicized and written in regular iambic nine nine-lined stanzas with the fixed rhyme scheme: *ababccdee*. The contrast in form sheds light on the controlling paradox that holds the structure of the poem together. This paradox juxtaposes Native tribes with White hunters to emphasize the point of discussion, namely the atrocity of the latter. Words are chosen carefully to shed light on the bison herds' plight and their helplessness in the face of rifles and guns. Expressions centered on pursuit, slaughter, and greed generate a gloomy atmosphere and outnumber the kinder ones associated with Native hunters ("loved," "fealty," "pious," etc.).

Mair begins the poem with an outstanding depiction of the unspoiled vast Canadian prairies. The speaker's musings are interrupted when he sees a bison in front of him. "He was the last survivor of his clan" (1890, 59). The bison he saw was deeply wounded. He "roar[ed] so loud /... but no sound, / No tongue congenial answered to his call" (59). The poet "endowed the noble beast with song" to voice his complaint against the reckless White hunter (59). For food, the song begins, bison herds were hunted by "*nations primitive, / Who throve on us, and loved our life-stream's roar*" (60). According to Hughes, "Indians were living in ecological balance with the herds of buffalo" (1996, 42). These were the happy days of the bison, the days of "*food and freedom*" on "*grassy-green earth*" and "*smokeless skies*" (Mair, 59-60). The preceding alliterative sounds create sweet music that implies harmony and undisrupted life in nature. The bison never rebels against being hunted by Indigenous peoples who self-restrained their egoism through modest stewardship. Its subservience to humans "[t]o quit the claims of hunger, not of greed" has been a sacred mission for its existence on Earth (60).

Speaking about cattle, the Noble Qur'an states: "Do they not see that We have created for them of what Our Hands have created the **cattle**, so that they are their owners. / And We have subdued them [Cattle] unto them [humans]

so that some of them [Cattle] they [humans] have for **riding** and some they **eat**. / And they have (**other**) **benefits** from them, and they get (**milk**) to drink. Will they not then be **grateful**?" (36:71-73, bold mine). The cattle are a divine gift fulfilling various human needs like the ones illustrated in the verses. Animals (domesticated like cattle or free-roaming ones like bison herds) are created to carry out such tasks; the bison admits this fact in the poem. Primitive tribes' hunting, the bison declares, has never been "[h]eaven forbid[den]" (Mair, 60). Moderate hunting for food is described as "*the blameless strife / Enjoined upon all creatures, small and great*," and human hunters are no exception (60). "[O]ur life," the bison admits, "[e]nded in fair fulfilment of our fate" (60). Melodious words grouped by fricative alliteration via the repetition of the airy /f/ sound imply that hunting is not against innateness, logic, or religion.

When "*the red man mixed his blood / With paler currents*," the doom of the bison rose on the horizon with the coming of "*a race – / The reckless hunters of the plains*" (60). The lines indicate that the fate of Indigenous tribes has been tied to that of the bison herds both in prosperity and predicament. Unlike the Indigenous hunter, the White hunter does not live up to the honor of being a guardian of the bison herds. He gives up his stewardship to hunt them with the gun of greed and economic/political profit. The Islamic doctrine of moderation is absent; consequently, excessive hunting irritates the bison. It describes the White hunter as a "*destroyer*" "*who vied / In wanton slaughter for the tongue and hide, / To satisfy vain ends and longings base*" (60). The Natives wasted no part of the hunted animal; White hunters wasted the whole animal for a few parts (the tongue and the hide). The base longings of the hunters were to starve the Natives and force them "off the Great Plains and onto reservations" (Phippen, 2016). Killing the bison becomes a noble national contest; even "tourists shot the animals from the windows of trains" in vain (Phippen).

White hunters are metaphorically depicted as "*ministers of mischief... / Who yearn for havoc as the world's supreme delight*" (Mair, 61). With wild enthusiasm, the hunters raced for as much killing as possible. By the end of the race, "*waned the myriads*" (61). The complaint is almost done, and the song is about to end. In its finale, the bison approaches its death with a "*prophecy*" which becomes true: "*I see our spoilers build their cities great / Upon our plains*" (61). Prophet Muhammad said: "Whoever is not merciful to others will not be treated mercifully" (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, b. 78, h. 26). Hence, the bison resumes its song with a jeremiadic wish which parallels the core of the Hadith: "*they who spared not are no longer spared*" (Mair, 61). It consoles itself with the faint hope that "*savage nations roam o'er native wilds again!*" (62).



The story of the bison and the White hunter is not one of a kind. Indeed, it is a recurrent story with many species. It is the story of blind hunting for food interrupted by extinction or near-extinction episodes. Then preservation or captive breeding follows to save the few remaining members. On that account, the command to eat from the gifts of the Almighty God in the Noble Qur'an is constantly entwined with fear from Him in case of abuse due to over-consumption: "And **eat** of the things which Allah has provided for you, lawful and good, and **fear** Allah in Whom you believe" (5:88, bold mine). The verse is preceded by the sacred prohibition: "[T]ransgress not. Verily, Allah does not like the transgressors" (5:87). The divine license to humans to enjoy natural resources is accompanied by strict embargos to control their freedom that may threaten other creatures.

When hunting leads to the mortality of a race, it turns from a right to a sinful plight: "There is not a moving (living) creature on earth, nor a bird that flies with its two wings, but are **communities like you**. We have neglected nothing in the Book, **then unto their Lord they (all) shall be gathered**" (Qur'an, 6:38, bold mine). The Almighty God affirms that each species represents a community just like the human community. Hence, the bison herds are equal to the human community. They have a fair right to live and to die for a rational cause and in an appropriate manner. Lilburn in "Ghost Song" writes: "The buffalo are under the earth, they are under the earth, *a people*" (1989, 356, italics mine). Whether a *community* in the Noble Qur'an or a *people* in Lilburn's poem, the bison is a race atrociously abused by humans. Animals and humans, the end of the verse affirms, will be gathered for judgment on the Day of Resurrection. Humans will be punished for their denial of their stewardship, and assaulted animals will undoubtedly avenge themselves.

### 2.3 Fur and fat factors

Hunting animals for fur and fat is allowed in Islam as long as there is a bad need and if hunting is practiced moderately and using appropriate tools that lead to a swift death of the prey. Many animals are hunted for *fur* such as rabbits, foxes, and seals. Other animals are hunted for *fat* like seals, bears, and whales. In Pratt's "The Ice-Floes," hunters travel north after the fur and fat of "'white harps,'" a type of seal (1923, 107). Pratt (1882-1964) was a poet, professor, and critic whose poetry frequently reflects his Newfoundland background with the sea and maritime life as being central to many of his poems (Pitt, 2008). The poet was concerned with Canadian economic and social problems, and he presented a generally realistic unsentimental view of life often tinted with humor and irony (Pitt).

The poem is written in five stanzas of variable length. Most of them are dense to suit the detailed description of three days of seal hunting. The poet effectively employs the enjambment as a technical device for a flowing storyline. The rhyme scheme of the first half of the poem is almost regular: *aa*. It implies the mechanical killing and skinning of seals. Additionally, verbs recur heavily to imply the continuous work in the hunting field. With the beginning of the snowstorm in the second half of the poem, the poet switches to an *abab* rhyme scheme in most lines. This switch in music marks a shift in the hunters' luck and foresees their final annihilation for their cruelty. Fixed rhythmical beats within lines are absent. Nevertheless, internal rhyme focuses attention on words beginning with the same sounds. Few figures of speech are employed. Literal depictions of seal hunting are used, instead. They serve the thematic structure of the poem and help the reader visualize the cold slaughter of seals. Moreover, there is a strong emphasis on the language of numbers throughout the poem. For instance, the poet presents the number of hunted seals gradually, beginning with high piles until twenty thousand seals. Numbers provide a logical base for the enormity of the hunt. Expressions oriented on profit and death typically merge with the gloomy atmosphere of the poem.

Although the poem was published in 1923, a 2019 e-journal article refers with a documentary video clip to the fact that "[t]ens of thousands of seals off Canada's east coast... are beaten with clubs, shot with rifles and harpooned or stabbed. Most are pups between two weeks and three months old" (Dalton). The bloody practice continues from the poet's days until the wake of the twenty-first century because it supports seals' fur and oil markets, while the remaining parts of the carcass are left behind. The speaker in the poem is a seal hunter who begins the hunting journey on "*The Eagle*" (Pratt, 107, italics original). "There were hundreds of thousands of seals," he remarks (107). He and the other hunters started "harvesting" them, and "the day was [theirs]" (107). Stewardship and moderation are not present because the hunters are overwhelmed by utilitarianism with a mere "view of nature as resources for purposes of capital accumulation" (Laferrrière & Stoett, 1999, 40).

On the morning of the second day, the speaker contemplates the seal's harsh life and how it adapts to its freezing environment to survive. With "the shout / Of command," he "flung those thoughts aside" (Pratt, 108). The reader remarks a shift in language; war words are employed to liken the process of seal hunting to a military attack on a helpless nation. Hunters are "[a]ssigned to [their] places" "[i]n the breathless rush for the day's attack" (108). What follows is dire atrocity:

With the rise of the sun we started to kill,  
 A seal for each *blow* from the iron *bill*  
 Of our gaffs. From the nose *to* the *tail* we  
 ripped them,  
 And laid their *quivering* carcasses flat  
 On the ice; then with our knives we stripped  
 them  
 For the sake of the pelt and its lining of  
*fat*. (108, italics mine)

Seals are easy targets with their slow motion on land. Accordingly, all depictions focus on the killing without the least self-defense on the part of seals. The use of alliteration – highlighted in italics within the lines – draws attention to the tragedy. To illustrate, the repetition of the /s/ sound denotes sinister evil and quickness on the part of hunters, while the voiceless /t/ implies abruptness as felt by seals. Words with the same initials create a bitter visual image of "blow[ing]" "bill[s]" – a bill is a cutting or pruning tool with a hooked blade – and "quivering carcasses" butchered "for" "fat."

The hunters commit two horrible crimes. First, they club seals to death. Second, they skin seals while many of them are still alive which is understood from the phrase: *quivering carcasses*. Therefore, hunting turns into torture. Prophet Muhammad said: "Verily Allah has enjoined goodness to everything; so when you kill, kill in a good way and when you slaughter, slaughter in a good way. So every one of you should sharpen his knife, and let the slaughtered animal die comfortably" (*Sahih Muslim*, b. 34, h. 4810). He associates taking the life of animals with three fundamentals: the Almighty God, goodness, and comfort. Mercy rather than torture is supposed to control the relationship between hunters and hunted animals. Islamic hunting principles target the benefit of humans with the least infliction of suffering to the prey.

The second day comes to an end; the "skins" are dragged to the ship "with the 'harps' piled high" (Pratt, 108). So far, the journey has been a success, and the hunters see fine profit in the high piles. While the reader is satisfied with two days of cruelty and bloodshed, the greedy hunters are not. The massacre continues on the third day: "Fast as our arms could swing we slew them, / Ripped them, 'sculpted' them, roped and drew them / To the pans where the seals in pyramids rose" (108). The series of action verbs in the lines affirms the hunters' preoccupation with killing without the slightest self-reproach that may interrupt their work. The repetition of the /s/ sound implies menacing danger and inevitable evil. Moreover, the poet emphasizes the huge number of hunted seals in the metaphor which likens their piles to pyramids. Soon, he moves from metaphorical language to numbers to shock the reader: the hunters "had

nine thousand dead" and "[b]y the time the afternoon had fled; / and that an added thousand or more" (108). This had been the harvest of just one ship in merely three days. Hundreds of thousands must be the harvest of all hunting ships each year.

The third day's hunting is not over: the hunters set forth in the "day's last chase" to get "[a]nother load of four 'harps' a man" (109). Nevertheless, the heartless hunter is eventually hunted. It is a jeremiadic stereotypical ending of selfish greedy humans. The hunters are lost in "the north-east wind" (109). The wind is subservient to the Almighty God's will, and it is a sign of His boundless powers: "[I]n the veering of **winds** and clouds which are held between the sky and the earth, are indeed *Ayât* (**proofs, evidences, signs**, etc.) for people of understanding" (Qur'an, 2:164, italics original, bold mine). "The wind," Prophet Muhammad adds, "comes from Allah's mercy...; it (sometimes) brings blessing and (sometimes) brings punishment. So when you see it, do not revile it, but ask Allah for some of its good, and seek refuge in Allah from its evil" (*Sunan Abi Dawud*, b. 43, h. 5078). Thus, the heavenly command of punishment was as "swift" as "the slaughter" of seals (Pratt, 109). The horrific scenario begins with "snow," "gale," and "night" and ends in "wail," "madness," and loss in "a fierce gust of snow" (109). With "dawn," "sixty dead" hunters were the storm's harvest, and the ship returned home with "twenty thousand seals that were killed" (110).

An Islamecocritical reading of the scene demonstrates how the Almighty God has interfered to teach the unjust hunters a lesson that cost them their lives: "And **many a township** did I give **respite** while it was given to **wrong-doing**. Then (in the end) I seized it (with **punishment**). And to Me is the (final) return (of all)" (Qur'an, 22:48, bold mine). The Almighty God constantly gives humans a chance to contemplate their deeds so that they may return to righteousness and abandon corruption. If humans do not yield to goodness, His ultimate powers punish the guilty. In secular Ecocriticism, such powers are ascribed to nature in what is called "nature's revenge." This term is employed by ecocritics like C. Cokinos in "A Hawk in the Margin's Cage: Robinson Jeffers and the Norton Anthologies" (1993), G. Dürbeck in "Popular Science and Apocalyptic Narrative in Frank Schätzing's *The Swarm*" (2012), and others. Nonetheless, since power, revenge, and greatness are divine attributes, an Islamecocritical understanding of such events relates them to the Creator, not to other creatures, namely nature with all its manifestations. Nature's revenge sounds like an illogical claim because all forms of current ecological degradation indicate its helplessness.

The poem ends in agony. The reader ponders the situation and wonders which to pity: the twenty thousand hunted seals or the sixty dead hunters! Are hunters dearer because they are fellow humans? Is seal hunting a crime for which they had their punishment? Indeed, the answer to the last question depends on two major aspects: necessity and hunting tools. In the past, seal hunting was a necessity to satisfy humans' need for fur and fat with no other available options. "And Allah has made for you...", the verse goes, "out of the **hides** of the cattle (tents for) dwelling, which you find so light (and handy) when you travel and when you stay (in your travels); and of their **wool, fur, and hair** (sheep wool, camel fur, and goat hair), furnishings and articles of convenience (e.g. carpets, blankets), comfort **for a while**" (Qur'an, 16:80, bold mine). Part of the usage of some animals is to provide humans with necessities *for a while*. Currently, humans have found alternatives for seals' fur and fat. Consequently, the necessity factor becomes absent. The present *necessity* for seal hunting does not exceed economic profit and welfare interests; it is primarily motivated by a market hungry for non-essentials. Talking about hunting tools, seals are clubbed in an atrocious manner that causes unnecessary suffering. This atrocity clashes with unspoiled innateness which is irritated by each detail of the hunting process as depicted in the poem. That is why many individuals and organizations set furious attacks against seal hunters to gain harm prevention for seals.

Seals are unfortunately targeted by both hunters and climate change. Harp seal mothers give birth and nurse their pups on the pristine ice floes, and once they leave, "pups still need ice to rest on as they learn to swim and feed on their own" (Fink, 2021). With the lack of solid ice, seal pups "likely die as a result of being crushed in the ice, drowned, or abandoned on shore where they will be vulnerable to predators" (Fink). This is a step toward extinction. Consequently, hunting and environmental hazards threaten the divine balance of seals' ecosystem, and the former should be considered an act of Earth corruption. Anyhow, the good news that should be documented in the present study is that Canada's commercial seal hunting continues to be an industry in steep decline due to the EU ban on commercial seal products in 2009, COVID-19 restrictions, and with 36 international bans on seal products for unnecessary items as luxury fur garments (Fink). The preceding data emphasize that market demand is the actual facet of many environmental evils. This way, spreading awareness and emphasizing the role of the individual should be magnified for monitoring commercial hunting.

#### 2.4 Fun factor

Killing animals for fun is the cruelest hunting factor. The following is not a conventional hunting poem. However,

this piece unfolds much more meanings than tens of stereotypical hunting scenes. Christensen's "Keeping Fear Away" handles hunting for fun or what is called: sport hunting. The poet (1951-) has published four books of poetry, and his poems have appeared in numerous anthologies, writing journals, and literary magazines ("Peter Christensen: Biography"). With his remarkable passion for exploring wilderness mountain areas and his work as a guide; ranch hand; and Park Ranger, the poet's literary career is diverse with the natural world becoming his muse ("Peter"). The concise poem under consideration is written in free verse. Music is internal, lines run on with no punctuation marks at all, and capitalized words refer to the beginning of ideas. For pausing and opening a space for contemplation, the poet relies on gaps inside lines, natural breaks by line ends, and spaces among stanzas. The poem narrates a series of events in an objective plain manner and leaves the reader to fill the emotional gaps and to respond to what s/he sees. As mentioned earlier, there are gaps inside lines and among the letters of one of the words to accentuate this idea. Few figures of speech appear in the poem to focus the reader's attention on grim bare facts. Language is simple and becomes colloquial in many lines to involve the reader in the poem's atmosphere.

The speaker keeps fear away by placing it in the natural creatures surrounding him. He is "a jughound / planting the geophones / to record blast vibrations" (Christensen, 1981, 374). He works "[a]t the 'surveyed' site," a "valley" (374). "Sometimes between shots," he brags,

I toss a stick of geogell  
 into the air  
 Shoot it  
 c r a c k the morning  
 Blow up rocks and trees  
*for fun* (374, italics mine)

The letters of the word *c r a c k* are separated by spaces to imply the interruption of the morning calmness by explosives so intense that they crack the morning and the word *crack* itself. Despite the musical effect of the light alliteration in the last line, the entire scene is met by a frown on the part of the reader at the speaker who finds fun in destruction. The jughound apparently blows up rocks and trees for no logical reason.

Individuals who believe that rocks and trees are non-sentient creatures may find it acceptable to blow them up for fun. Therefore, Christensen intensifies the argument by introducing two sentient creatures which are equally destroyed to nourish fun. "Doug," the speaker's co-worker, is seen "[n]ear a field" "blow[ing] the ass off a gopher /

halfway down its hole / cap wire trailing behind" (374). Having fun is the group's ultimate goal, and it is undoubtedly motivated by total selfishness and absent stewardship. The lines introduce the recurrent literary and cinematic "picture of humans as mentally unbalanced predators threatening an otherwise harmonious natural realm" (Goodbody, 2007, 169). Pure Innateness, consequently, drives the reader to admit that both workers are mentally sick, using their working tools to torture fellow creatures for fun. Nevertheless, the shame is not over.

The speaker points to a "raven" that "picks up / the bread" (Christensen, 374). So far, what is going on is utterly natural. What is unnatural is that "the bread [is] / wrapped around a blasting cap" (374). Once the raven "flies for a hundred feet / Up into his sky," it blasts by "the electric touch" (374). The poet's use of the pronoun *his* implies the raven's belonging to nature and the speaker's alienation from it. He does not feel connected to it or its creatures because arrogance makes him feel superior to his surroundings. The body of the raven is torn into pieces; what is left are "black feathers / floating down" (374). The words *feathers* and *floating* are combined through alliteration to create a synecdoche which implies that the body was lost in the blast, while only the feathers survived it. Those feathers are welcomed by "the shouts and yahoos" of the psychic killers "on the ground" (374). The use of onomatopoeia allows the reader to hear the group's queer reaction to the blast. It is unclear who exploded the raven. It can be the speaker, Doug, or a third co-worker. Nevertheless, it is crystal clear that irresponsibility is outspread among them. They feel no remorse for their destruction of the rocks, the trees, the gopher, or the raven. Instead, they celebrate the killing to encourage it. They are merely having fun and keeping inherent human fear of nature away by showing their false manly strength on helpless creatures.

What occurs in this poem can hardly be classified as hunting in its common form. Nonetheless, by replacing the geogell and blasting caps with guns and rifles; the surveyed valley with open wilderness; and the gopher as well as the raven with big or small game, the mates will be hunters. From this symbolic angle, the message of the poem will unfold itself to the reader. The scenes depicted in the poem and sport hunting scenes share the same keywords: humans–animals–killing–fun–no purpose. Sport hunting should be viewed through this lens. The pointlessness and inhumanity of blasting the gopher and the ravine parallel shooting a deer or an elk in sport hunting.

"Do not make anything having life as a target," Prophet Muhammad warned (*Sahih Muslim*, b. 34, h. 4813). In another Hadith, he stated: "There is no person who kills a small bird or anything larger for no just reason, but Allah,

the Mighty and Sublime, will ask him about it..." (*Sunan an-Nasa'i*, b. 43, h. 4450). Sport hunting, considering these Ahadith, inflicts harm because targeted animals have aimless suffering and death. Consequently, the *Encyclopedia of Islamic Jurisprudence* deems that hunting is disliked, even banned, if its purpose is to have fun or if it is practiced as a leisure activity ("Hunting," 1993, 115). Hence, sport hunters are not committed stewards and will pay for their reckless killing of other creatures on the Day of Resurrection. This Islamic appreciation of sport hunting is analogous to that of Christianity. Baxter writes that stewardship in Christianity involves responsibility to the benevolent creator for providing the non-human world for human use and a duty of human stewardship toward other life forms (2005, 2). Failure to be committed to this stewardship, he believes, "results in impiety, sacrilege, inhumanity or cruelty" (2) which are all demonstrated in sport hunting.

Sport hunting has developed as an elite social activity among the aristocracy. However, by eliminating the prestige surrounding it, it will be a bare unjustified killing of animals mostly left to rot in the wilderness. Moreover, sport hunting may corrupt the balanced forces of Earth in case of overhunting. Corruption is banned in Islam; the Almighty God commands humans "'not [to] act corruptly, making mischief on the earth'" (Qur'an, 2:60). Nonetheless, this sport continues because it supports hunting clubs, hunting weapons manufacturers, and other economic bodies. In 2001, over thirteen million hunters "spent over \$20.5 billion on their sport" (Cupp & Joshpe, 2008, 137). Sport hunting subdues to the market laws; it will fall apart if individuals abandon it.

### III. CONCLUSION

Hunting in Islam is governed by theoretical basics (stewardship, divine judgment, moderation, prohibition of corruption, harm prevention, innateness, and balance) that should be applied by responsible hunters. Permitting or prohibiting hunting is regulated by Islamic rulings regarding the hunter, the prey, and the hunting tools. These basics and rulings present an unbiased evaluation of hunting *f* factors (food, fur, fat, and fun). Hunting for food, fur, and fat should be controlled by necessity, means, and moderation. Hunters should be committed stewards who do not inflict corruption or harm. True believers are watchful of divine judgment, too. Hunting practices that do not irritate innateness or go against heavenly orders are accepted. On the other hand, hunting is prohibited when its aim is having fun in sport hunting.

In Mair's "The Last Bison," hunting for food is a respected human need when carried out by moderate



stewards like Native tribes. White hunters, in contrast, are condemned for causing ecological harm and corrupting the divine balance. They are motivated by greed and profit. Therefore, they will not escape divine judgment for each single bison shot in vain. Seals hunted for fur and fat in Pratt's "The Ice-Floes" are literally tortured by merciless hunters. They are hunted using inappropriate tools, and many are skinned alive. Seals are, likewise, harvested in huge numbers, and their existence on Earth becomes threatened. Consequently, these practices are abhorred in Islam for the lack of mercy and necessity. Hunting for fur and fat should be controlled or banned depending on the availability of alternatives. Economic and political pressures should also be resisted for a fair debate. Killing animals for fun inflicts harm on preys, corrupts the divine balance in some cases, and is valueless. These facts are underlined in Christensen's "Keeping Fear Away" through a symbolic simulation of real sport hunting. Sport hunters, the poem suggests, are guilty of perpetrating harm and causing unneeded corruption and suffering. Thus, the reader's awareness is raised, and his/her unspoiled innateness is fueled to stand against this type of hunters.

In addition to the examined four hunting factors, some animal species are hunted out of the fear factor, namely fear for humans' life; livestock; crops; and other dietary resources. Bears and badgers are pursued toward this end in W. Watson's "Sermon on Bears" and R. Kroetsch's "Seed Catalogue." The two pieces are introduced for further study due to their inspiring consideration of this hunting factor. They propose that moderate rational hunting by worthy stewards to secure humans and their resources does not disturb the reader's innateness, cause drastic ecological loss, stimulate anxiety from divine judgment, or corrupt the divine balance. Watson and Kroetsch argue that predators and vermin are glorified creatures of the Almighty God that enjoy an intrinsic value. Simultaneously, their wild nature belittles humankind's arrogance and reminds it of the ultimate powers of the Creator who commands some species to serve it directly while it has no control over others.

Most postmodern communities suffer from schizophrenic relationships with hunters and animals. They are torn among need, bloodshed, mercy, and cruelty because of the Western human-nature dichotomy that should be replaced by a human-divine-nature decree. Instead of the hunter-prey binary, the study presents the hunter-divine-prey verdict. Hunting disputes can be, thus, resolved by referring back to the Creator. Hunting is as ancient as human's existence on Earth, and it has been an instinctual demand that was later mutilated by anthropocentric desires remote from divine maxims. Instincts, lusts, and desires are not neglected in Islam. Qur'anic verses and Sunnah texts

teach humans how to deal with them and how to control and organize their work. The Almighty God informs humans that following lusts blindly without returning to divine principles prompts inherent evil in the human psyche: "And who is more astray than one who follows his own lusts, without guidance from Allâh?" (Qur'an, 28:50). In the same lines, Prophet Muhammad affirms that true belief springs out of conformity between one's desires and moderate Islamic teachings: "None of you [truly] believes until his desires are subservient to that which I have brought [, namely Islam]" (*An-Nawawi's 40 Hadith*, h. 41). The result of following this divine path is that the evil inciting self is countered by the remorseful self which gradually and with persistence can be transformed to a tranquil self as outlined in the discussion of the three levels of the self/the psyche from the standpoint of Islamic psychology (Skinner, 2019, 1090). Hunting rulings in Islam are based on this pattern via appreciating humans' instinctual need for hunting and guarding this need against evil greedy motivations to reach a peaceful inter-relationship between the hunter and the prey. This is the valuable contribution of Islamecocritical theory in its appreciation of hunting factors.

#### Notes:

1. The Sunnah refers to the sayings, traditions, and actions of Prophet Muhammad which emphasize and explain the verses of *The Qur'an*. It is written in separate numbered units; each of them is called Hadith (plural: Ahadith). The Sunnah is collected in *al-Kutub as-Sitta* (*The Six Books*) by six Muslim scholars. Each of *The Six Books* is considered one big collection which consists of a number of books.
2. The Sunnah translation is retrieved from <https://sunnah.com/>. For in-text citation, each Hadith is followed by the collection title, the book number, and the Hadith number.

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